



## **Phase 2/3 Covid 19 Response Plan**

### **Homelessness and Housing Related Support Services**

**“Support; Plan; Build; Transform”**

**JUNE 2020**

## Introduction

Flintshire Council and its partners are committed to supporting people who are at risk of homelessness and those who become homeless. When homelessness does occur every effort is made to ensure it is “rare, brief and non-recurring”.

The Local Authority like many others has responded well to the changes in legislation following the introduction of the Housing Wales Act 2104 and makes good use of Housing Support Grant (formerly Supporting People Funding) to commission and deliver a range of supported housing and specialist support services that promote independence and offer help to those with housing and other support needs. Prevention work and early intervention is well embedded within Flintshire services.

Like many areas, the demand for affordable housing outstrips supply and social housing register application numbers are increasing as people seek security of tenure and low cost housing. Private renting is an option for some, but the limitations of Local Housing Allowance rates, along with the roll out of Universal Credit, does create significant barriers to low income and benefit dependent households.

The Covid 19 health crisis has created significant challenges for Flintshire residents and whilst excellent work has been done to offer accommodation to people who had previously slept rough or became homeless during the covid19 crisis, there have been difficulties with supply of emergency accommodation. Guidance from Welsh Government encouraged the block booking of hotel and B&B accommodation along with sourcing student accommodation as part of the immediate crisis management response. Regrettably this has not been a positive approach for Flintshire with no local supply of Hotels, B&B's or Student Accommodation available throughout the pandemic,.

In response to this Flintshire has sought to make best use of its existing Temporary Accommodation Portfolio. This stock has its limitations due to some units having shared facilities. Flintshire have sought to bolster the supply of 1 bed self-contained accommodation by taking on additional units of social housing stock as temporary accommodation. Work has also been undertaken to remodel the delivery of accommodation and support at a Night Shelter Building which is run by The Wallich and had been launched early in 2020. Temporary Portakbins have been located within the Night Shelter Site and it has operated more as a Supported Housing Setting with 24/7 provision throughout the covid 19 crisis period.

Excellent work has been done to avoid people from becoming homeless and to stabilize housing settings and mediate with families and households where people are precariously housed to avoid homelessness occurring. Whilst this has kept numbers needing emergency housing down, it is acknowledged that this only offers a temporary solutions for many people and officers continue to support those households and help

them plan for longer term settled housing in order to avoid further tensions which may result on homelessness later on.

This Plan outlines how the Authority seeks to successfully move on the existing covid19 cohort (those presently in temporary accommodation) whilst also mindful of the increased challenges that will come about on the back of easing of lockdown restrictions and removal of positive interventions such as the “Evictions Ban” and “Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme”, which are due to expire over the coming months.

We know there will be increases in demand for housing support and homelessness services and are attempting to “resource up” in advance, so to offer additional support with a view to reducing risks to homelessness and further reliance on interim housing options.

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## Having a move-on protocol in place with rapid re-housing at its heart.

As per the Guidance for Phase 2 Planning, a process of “mapping and cohorting” has been undertaken to better understand the present need for accommodation and support based on the existing cohort of people in interim housing.

As of w/c22/06/2020 Flintshire had 38 households in interim accommodation and 34 of these are owed duties under Housing Wales Act 2014. The breakdown is below:

<b>Household Type</b>	<b>Number</b>
Families needing 3 bed	3
Families needing 2 bed	4
Couples needing 1 bed	1
Singles needing 1 bed	17
Singles needing Supported Housing	5
Singles needing Housing First	4
No recourse to Public Funding	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>

We have already resettled 18 households during the covid19 pandemic and all have gone onto long term settled housing. Not all of these households were accommodated under interim housing duties and some have moved on under prevention duties, but this demonstrates the success that has been achieved despite the lockdown period.

<b>Household Type</b>	<b>Number</b>
Families into 3 bed	2
Families into 2 bed	2
Couples into 1 bed	1
Singles into 1 bed	9
Singles into Supported Housing	2
Families into Supported Housing	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>

Furthermore we have assisted 5 households into refuge accommodation. These households are now in safe accommodation and will continue to be supported by the Homeless Team and support services. These households fled violence or other forms of abuse within the home during the covid 19 pandemic period.

Of the current 34 eligible households remaining in temporary housing, we have already identified 15 households who are lined up for long term settled housing solutions within social housing. We anticipate these moves should be completed by the end July 2020 and appropriate support packages will be offered to start up and sustain tenancies.

<b>Household Type</b>	<b>Number</b>
Families into 3 bed	3
Families into 2 bed	4
Couples into 1 bed	0
Singles into 1 bed	8
Singles into Supported Housing	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>

All of the households moving on in during Phase 2, will be offered Tenancy Support and other services that will meet their needs and enable them to have a positive start to life in their new homes. Our commitment to offer all households tenancy support seeks to ensure that no tenancies fail when people are moved onto settled housing. This should reduce the likelihood of people coming back through as homeless in the future and avoid repeat risks of homelessness.

Appropriate furnishing of properties and using psychologically informed approaches to enable people to “make a house a home” will be key to the rapid rehousing approach and funding is requested to offer “home starter” packs and furnishings. Assisted technology and Wi-Fi infrastructure will be encouraged and supported through the purchase of items such as “tablets” and “Alexa” or other programmable devices to enable active engagement with services who continue to adopt digital engagement as services move to the “new normal”.

Some households are currently accommodated in Council homes which had been secured to bolster the temporary housing portfolio when the covid 19 pandemic first began. Where possible we aim to keep those people in those homes but issue them with long term social housing tenancies with the Council along with appropriate support packages. This will avoid disruption for the households and reduce increased trauma as a result of them having to relocate again.

This leaves us with the remaining “covid cohort” as below:

<b>Household Type</b>	<b>Number</b>
Families	0
Couples into 1 bed	1
Singles into 1 bed	11
Singles into Supported Housing	3
Singles into Housing First	4
Singles with No Recourse to Public Funding	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>

Mindful of the need to match people to appropriate accommodation the Authority has also reviewed its “move on” list for those who have achieved their support plan outcomes and are ready to move on from supported housing settings. Such moves free

up valuable bedspaces for some of our more vulnerable households who would benefit from the supported housing environment and enables a broader view of available accommodation. Through the Common Allocations Policy, enhanced priority (Band 1 status) is offered to this group of applicants to enable rapid rehousing once people are ready for independent living. Resettlement support moves with the applicants for a transitional period of a minimum 6 weeks to enable successful tenancy start up in the new home.

## Improving the quality and reducing the dependency on emergency/ temporary accommodation solutions.

The present interim housing offer for Flintshire is through a mixture of 1) self contained leased accommodation, 2) leased houses of multiple occupation and 3) emergency bed provision run by The Wallich.

As of w/c22/06/2020 there are 51 units of temporary accommodation available through the Private Sector Leased Portfolio. Whilst the majority is self contained a total of 21 units are bed spaces without en-suite and kitchenette type facilities.

<b>Temporary Accommodation</b>	<b>Private Rented</b>	<b>Social</b>
One bedroom (HMO)	21	0
One bedroom (self- contained)	0	17
Two bedroom	6	2
Three bedroom	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>

It should also be noted that some of the single bed self-contained units presently used as temporary accommodation are Council owned stock. Where possible these homes will be “flipped” into long term lets and will offer the current homeless households, long term housing without the need to move. These properties will however be lost from the portfolio and consideration will be given to replacing them with other 1 bed Council stock.

The Wallich run “emergency bed provision” is a service that prior to covid 19 offered up to 10 bedspaces all of which were dormitory style with shared facilities and delivered through a Night Shelter model. When the pandemic started, 7 Portakabins were brought in to bolster numbers of self-contained bedspaces and offer greater flexibility with the facility and to offer increased capacity for social distancing and self-isolation. The service moved to a 24/7 provision in late March 2020 and adopted a more supported housing service with access to services and support every hour of the day, with services such as Harm Reduction Service dropping in to deliver advice and support to service users and staff.

<b>Emergency Bed Provision</b>	<b>Number</b>
Portakabins (single)	6
Portakabins (double)	1
Dormitory Style	10

The Emergency Bed Provision prior to covid 19 pandemic was not seen as part of the Councils long term plan for emergency accommodation but was developed to meet a growing need for accommodation for non-priority single people within Flintshire, who would otherwise have had to sleep rough.

With an outstanding covid cohort of 23 we would hope to be able to move most people on into settled accommodation within the next 3-6 months. It is however unclear as to how many other households will need accommodating as the Phase 2 and Phase 3 periods approach and as lockdown measures ease. Through pro-active prevention services we would hope to reduce the reliance on interim housing options that avoid the need for stays in temporary accommodation, and when temporary accommodation is required quick move on to appropriate long term housing is the priority.

There is a commitment to move away from shared environments and towards a temporary and emergency housing offer that provides self-contained accommodation as the norm. Avenues for further exploration as part of the Phase 2 Plan include:

- Decommission the existing shared housing offer within the Private Sector Leased Portfolio
- Increase the supply of self-contained Temporary Accommodation by:
  - Engaging landlords with a view to growing the Private Sector Leased portfolio with high quality self-contained accommodation
  - Bring back into use empty properties to supplement the existing Private Sector Leased Portfolio with high quality self-contained accommodation
- Ensure a clear exit strategy for the Homeless Hub Emergency Bed Provision

#### *Links to Planned Activity for Phase 2*

*PROJECT 2 – Rapid Rehousing Staff*

*PROJECT 3 – Rapid Rehousing Home Starter Budget*

*PROJECT 10 – Mental Health & Wellbeing – Collaborative Outreach*

*PROJECT 11 – Criminal Offender Tenancy Support*

*PROJECT 12 – Mental Health Support Worker*

*PROJECT 15 – Peer Mentoring and Tenancy Sustainability*

*PROJECT A – Develop 4 MMC Units*

*PROJECT B – Purchase of self-contained 1 bed units (upto 10 units)*



**Putting rapid re-housing at the heart of services and utilise a range of support models (i.e. Housing First, Critical Time Interventions (CTI), floating support, assertive outreach) for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.**

All Housing Support Grant commissioned Services (outlined in Appendix 1) are at capacity. Additional capacity is sought to deliver more support services for not just the existing covid cohort but also to respond to the increased demand for services as lockdown eases over the coming months.

Housing First

Flintshire has secured funding via the Youth Innovation Fund to develop a Housing First for Young People Project. This service is in its infancy and is currently on hold as pressures within the homeless team as a result of covid 19 meant officers were not able to be released for this work. At the earliest opportunity we shall release these officers and seek to bolster the capacity for Housing First by securing money from Phase 2 Grant for additional officers and a Team Leader. 4 individuals from the existing covid cohort have been identified as in need of a Housing First approach and we are also aware of other people who are at risk of homelessness and may require intensive support through a Housing First approach in the coming months. We seek to bolster this service and make this our “go to” provision for people with complex needs.

Rapid Rehousing (Critical Time Intervention and Floating Support)

All existing Floating Support Services are at capacity and we therefore seek to increase some of the existing provision to resource up and meet the increased demand for Critical Time Interventions and Floating Support services. Dedicated support through 2 additional officers to support the existing cohort into long term accommodation. Creating greater capacity within other forms of floating support will enable not only successful move on a transition from Rapid Rehousing into settled housing, but also assist households who may otherwise be at risk of losing their accommodation within failing tenancies across the county.

North Wales Collaborative Outreach Support

Although many people who have slept rough are now in accommodation we still seek to utilize the model of assertive outreach and service reconnection for those individuals who have support needs relating to mental health, substance misuse.

A new North Wales Collaborative Assertive Outreach Project has recently been established by the Area Planning Board, thanks to Welsh Government Complex Needs Funding. Although only in the startup phase it is clear there is great synergy between this activity and the Tenancy Sustainment and Rapid Rehousing Approach needed to avoid people returning to the streets. The Collaborative Outreach Service aims to:

- Establish a specialist multi-agency collaborative outreach response that can successfully engage/re-engage with vulnerable individuals living with complex

needs around substance misuse, mental health and homelessness, who are not in contact with or who have lost contact with, mainstream services.

- Provide a more supported approach for this vulnerable cohort needing to access services.
- Keep people safe, including vulnerable individuals and members of the general public
- To reduce long term demand on services generated by this cohort of vulnerable individuals.

In order to achieve these aims the Area Planning Board through the Welsh Government Complex Needs Program aims to provide the following resources across North Wales. Flintshire is partnered with Wrexham through the Area Planning Board model in the East area:

- 3 x Collaborative Outreach Coordinators. Working to the BCUHB Harm Reduction Manager and located in East/Central/West areas
- 3 x Dedicated Mental Health & Well Being Outreach Workers. Working to the Collaborative Outreach Coordinators and also East/Central/West based.
- 3 x Dedicated Housing Outreach Workers. Again aligned to the East/Central/West area teams.

Although the Assertive Outreach Team is still in the process of being recruited concern has been expressed by the Cell Leads across North Wales that the Team may not have sufficient Mental Health capacity to meet the current and anticipated increased demand over the coming months/ North Wales Cell Leads have committed to applying for additional monies from the Phase 2 Homelessness fund for three additional Mental Health Support Workers, one each for East, West and Central areas for the remainder of 2020-2021.

### *Links to Planned Activity for Phase 2*

*PROJECT 2 – Rapid Rehousing Staff*

*PROJECT 3 – Rapid Rehousing Home Starter Budget*

*PROJECT 10 – Mental Health & Wellbeing – Collaborative Outreach*

*PROJECT 11 – Criminal Offender Tenancy Support*

*PROJECT 12 – Mental Health Support Worker*

*PROJECT 15 – Peer Mentoring and Tenancy Sustainability*

## **Increasing the availability of social housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.**

Priority 1 within Flintshire's Housing Strategy is to "Increase supply to provide the right type of homes in the right location". We have a significant demand for social rented properties through the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) Common Housing Register and for affordable rented and ownership through the TAI TEG register. To meet these demands the Council is delivering a range of solutions including building new homes and by:

- Influencing the Welsh Government Social Housing Grant programme, managed by the Local Authority, to ensure maximum investment to meet the right type of new build social housing across Flintshire
- Developing a forward development plan for the Council's new build programme post 2021 - Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP).

The SHARP has delivered 219 properties up to 30/4/20. 95 homes have been for social rent managed by the Local Authority and 124 for affordable (intermediate) rent managed by NEW Homes. SHARP has an ambitious delivery programme with 138 homes projected this financial year (69 social rent and 69 intermediate rent), and an estimated 390 homes (196 in 21/22 and 194 in 22/23) in the pipeline with 270 of these for social rent and 120 for intermediate rent.

Flintshire also continues to work in close partnership with RSL's to deliver affordable housing through the PDP and allocation of Social Housing Grant, 168 new homes are anticipated to be delivered between 2020/ 21-2022/ 23 for social rent.

In total, an estimate of 528 new homes are expected to be built for affordable housing between 20/21 and 2022/23, increasing Council and RSL stock and providing much needed accommodation for vulnerable people in Flintshire.

To compliment ambitious build plans, the Authority is also committed to make the best use of its existing stock. A review of Sheltered Housing Stock has commenced as there are areas of the county with an oversupply of Council owned Older Persons Housing and an Options Appraisal Model is being developed with a view to exploring ways of addressing this disparity between supply and demand. Opportunity to reclassify 1 bed Sheltered Stock to General Needs will be explored, along with other redevelopment options with an eye on the significant demand for 1 bed self-contained homes. Approx. 35% (600) of all housing applications on the Common Housing Register are for applicants 18-54 requiring 1 bed homes.

The Common Housing Register and Single Access Route to Housing Partnership (SARTH), adopts a Common Allocations Policy across the counties of Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire. All Local Authorities and Housing Association Partners (Adra, Cartrefi Conwy, Clwyd Alyn Housing Association, Grwp Cynefin, North Wales

Housing and Wales & West Housing) use the Common Housing Register for tenant selection and property matching.

In response to the covid19 pandemic and mindful of the need to assist those accommodated in all forms of interim housing (covid cohort) at this present time, partners have agreed to implement an Interim Lettings Policy which will see 50% of all available social housing allocated to the covid cohort through "direct lets". The approach is yet to be approved in each Local Authority area but a clear commitment and consensus has been reached amongst partners ahead of political sign off.

Housing partners are all now focussing on void turnaround and processes and dialogue between Lettings Teams and Local Authority Homeless Teams are underway to ensure appropriate matching of properties to our target "covid cohort". We would hope that a significant proportion of our covid cohort will benefit from social housing during the 3 month lettings period and there are already commitments for direct lets for several of our people who have been accommodated in Council homes, absorbed into the temporary accommodation portfolio as part of the covid response.

SARTH Partners work positively together on shared challenges and are committed to not evicting any households into homelessness. At a recent meeting the partners agreed to develop an Eviction Prevention Panel which will take a multi-agency approach to preventing evictions from Social Housing Landlord tenancies. Key to this will be dedicated support services for tenants to prevent evictions

#### *Links to Planned Activity for Phase 2*

*PROJECT 2 – Rapid Rehousing Staff*

*PROJECT 3 – Rapid Rehousing Home Starter Budget*

*PROJECT 10 – Mental Health & Wellbeing – Collaborative Outreach*

*PROJECT 11 – Criminal Offender Tenancy Support*

*PROJECT 12 – Mental Health Support Worker*

*PROJECT 15 – Peer Mentoring and Tenancy Sustainability*

## **Increasing the availability of private rented housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.**

11% of all homes in the Flintshire area are Private Rentals. This is significantly lower than the Wales average figures of 15%. Many households face significant barriers to renting privately in Flintshire, as is the case in other parts of Wales. Low income and benefit dependent households face significant barriers securing private rented accommodation locally.

When looking at the last 3 years homelessness outcomes the figures of positive outcomes into the Private Rented Sector are as follows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Positive Outcomes</b>	<b>Private Rented</b>	<b>As a %</b>
<b>2017/2018</b>	525	140	26%
<b>2018/2019</b>	477	110	23%
<b>2019/2020</b>	520	134	26%

Existing activities to help open up the market and increase the number of homeless households accommodated within the local private rental sector includes:

- Flintshire Bond Scheme – this Welsh Government Funded Scheme seeks to work with landlords and applicants to match people to available accommodation and enables this through the issuing of a Bond. Many landlords now insist on significant rent in advance and deposit payments as the norm.
- Rent In Advance and Deposits – where appropriate the Homeless Team will help people secure funding for rent in advance and deposits. These funds come from a variety of sources including, charitable grants, discretionary housing payments and Homeless Prevention Grant (spend to save budget)
- Social Lettings Agency Pilot – again seeking to maximise opportunities to learn from regional partners Flintshire is currently partnering with HAWS Social Lettings Agency run by Cartrefi Conwy Housing Association. We present part fund an officer who engages with local Landlords and there is a clear a focus on rehousing homeless people into accommodation secured by HAWS in Flintshire. This is an initial pilot and will be reviewed to ensure it offers value for money.

In additional to the above the following planned activities will be prioritised over the 2020/2021 period.

- Restructure of Housing & Prevention Service – in an effort to offer a co-ordinated approach to the Housing Options function, it is likely that the Flintshire Bond Scheme will now be moved following a service restructure and will be aligned to the Housing Access and Housing Register Team. Presently they sit within the Housing programmes Service area.

- Develop an attractive Landlord Offer – this will include but not limited to include; access to advice and support; links to the Landlord Forum; property management options, leasing options, rent in advance, small repairs grants, enhanced deposits etc. These services will need marketing and targeting at local landlords.
- Pilot a 6 month Leasing Model – Council to lease accommodation from landlords and place households for a initial 6 month period and if successful the tenancy will convert to a Assured Shorthold
- Review the Social Lettings Agency Pilot – consideration will be given to the success of the Social Lettings Pilot in order to inform the decision making process in order to:
  - Extend the HAWS Social Lettings Pilot
  - Extend and enhance the HAWS Social Lettings Agency Pilot
  - Develop alternative models to increase access to the PRS
- Learn from the lessons of the Private Sector Leasing Pathfinder being piloted in neighbouring areas of North Wales (Conwy & Denbighshire). This builds upon the commitments made in the Regional Homelessness Strategy to “Develop a regional approach to improve the access to the private rented sector”
- Utilise Phase 2 Funding to offer enhanced financial incentives to landlords to assist homeless households into Private Rental accommodation and save tenancies that may otherwise fail without financial rescue packages

It is acknowledged that securing accommodation is a challenge, however we also know people will need significant support and wrap around services to enable them to sustain accommodation as they move on from interim housing. We therefore commit to tailored support packages to move people on through our Rapid Rehousing Approach and to ensure support is available to start up and succeed with tenancies. It is also anticipated that we will see significant increases in demand for services over the coming months and will need to bolster our resources to help save tenancies within the private rented sector that may be at increased risk of failure as a result of the covid 19 pandemic.

*Links to Planned Activity for Phase 2*

*PROJECT 2 – Rapid Rehousing Staff*

*PROJECT 3 – Rapid Rehousing Home Starter Funding*

*PROJECT 6 – Tenancy Rescue & Start Up Packages*

*PROJECT 10 – Mental Health & Wellbeing – Collaborative Outreach*

*PROJECT 11 – Criminal Offender Tenancy Support*

*PROJECT 12 – Mental Health Support Worker*

*PROJECT 15 – Peer Mentoring and Tenancy Sustainability*

## **Bringing empty properties back into use to house people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.**

Empty homes are a wasted resource and there is a commitment to tackle this problem and make best use of all the available housing resources within the County. Flintshire's Housing Strategy (2019-2024) confirms there are approximately 500 empty properties across Flintshire but there is limited resources to address the problem or incentivise owners to bring them back into use.

Priority 1 within the Housing Strategy is to "Increase supply to provide the right type of homes in the right location". In response to this challenge the Housing Strategy aims to increase the supply by bringing empty homes back into use through:

- Developing policies which identify options for securing empty properties and bringing them back into use
- Reducing the number of empty properties identified through the Council Tax system, working collaboratively with key partners to establish a priority list of target properties and focus resources on addressing them, particularly those which are long term empty or that attract complaints
- The provision of financial support to bring empty properties back into use by utilising existing funding available including through the social housing grant.

The Authority offers a range of incentives to bring properties back into use and to raise the standard of accommodation in Flintshire. In the last 3 years 22 properties have been brought back into use with the aid of the Houses into Home loan scheme, which in turn has created 41 self-contained units. Local intelligence suggests that whilst the Empty Homes Loan Scheme is attractive and financially viable, many landlords do not have the skills or appetite to manage a refurbishment project. We therefore seek to pilot a Project Management Role which can be offered to landlords to assist them with taking up the Loan Scheme and would then seek to engage landlords in Lease arrangements whereby accommodation could be targeted at homeless households or those at risk of homelessness.

There is also a commitment to closer working between the Housing & Prevention Service and our colleagues in Public Protection Service who administer the Empty Homes Schemes in order to target landlords to meet the need for increased supply of accommodation either through purchase of empty homes and taking them into the Council social housing stock, or securing them through long term lease arrangements. Increasing the pool of accommodation offers additional capacity for long term housing as well as assisting efforts to transform the existing temporary accommodation offer.

### *Links to Planned Activity for Phase 2*

*PROJECT 13 - Project Management Support for Refurbs through Empty Homes*

*PROJECT B – Block purchase of self-contained 1 bed units*

## **Providing support for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.**

Within the existing service delivery model of Flintshire Housing & Prevention Service we have a small multi-disciplinary team of staff who focus on young person's homelessness. The Young Persons Team includes; a dedicated Homeless Officer who carries a caseload of young people aged 18-24; a Youth Worker, funded through Youth Support Grant who engages with young people to address wider support needs and promotes positive wellbeing and relationship management; and a Children's Service Officer who engages with 16-17yr olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This focussed multi-disciplinary approach demonstrates the value of joint working and has helped develop a shared understanding of young people's needs across the 3 strands of housing, social care and youth service.

We also have Youth Innovation Funding to develop a Young Persons Housing First Project. Due to the Covid19 pandemic this service has been delayed in its development. We see great value in kick starting this activity within a broader Housing First approach and are committed to starting up this project at the earliest opportunity. We are seeking to bolster capacity for Housing First through Phase 2 Funding and see this intensive model of support as key to our management and co-ordination of support for all people with significant and complex support needs.

Whilst Flintshire does have a supply of supported accommodation for young people, there is a desire to increase this offer and raise standards in accommodation. Learning from Regional Partners is something that is increasingly the norm in North Wales and this has been helped through the development of the Regional Homelessness Strategy People, Homes and Services. Grwp Cynefin Housing Association has developed the Denbigh Hwb which is a multi-purpose accommodation and community resource in the town of Denbigh. We see value in a similar accommodation and services model which would enable a hub of activity and services for young people. We hope to complete some "Project Development" work on the back of Phase 2 funding to bring a range of partners together to develop a shared vision for a Young Persons Hub and begin planning for a purpose built facility in Flintshire.

Again through Regional working, we are aware of the Team around the Tenancy Project which operates within Conwy and Wrexham. This project is delivered by "tgp Cymru". Whilst we do not request any funding for this activity to be extended into Flintshire, with a commitment for Regional working we would seek to explore options for longer term funding to deliver activities such as this that build up additional resources of support.

The "young person's positive pathway" in line with the St Basils model of Best Practice will provide a focus for much of the co-ordination and multi-agency work we seek to implement on the young person's homelessness agenda in Flintshire over the coming years. Through enhanced partnership working we seek to maximise the impact of additional funding that has been provided to date by Welsh government on this agenda., and further strengthen links with youth services, social care, youth justice and other agencies offering early intervention and better understanding of housing and



homelessness issues amongst young people, their families and the support agencies working with them.

*Links to Planned Activity for Phase 2*

*PROJECT 9 – Project Officer for Young Persons Support Hub*

*PROJECT 14 – Crisis Renting Ready Training Package*

## **Ensuring multi-agency involvement at a strategic level and in the delivery of support.**

Flintshire has benefited from closer working relationships with partners on the back of the covid 19 response and will seek to maintain these working relationships as we move into Phase 2 and Phase 3 over the coming months. Engagement with strategic partners is ongoing through mechanisms such as:

- Co-ordination Cell for Covid 19 Response
- Flintshire Homelessness Forum
- North Wales Community Cohesion Group (Wrexham, Flintshire, Denbighshire)
- North Wales Homelessness Strategy Steering Group
- North Wales Housing Support Grant Group
- North Wales Homelessness Taskforce Group (HMPPS, Probation et al)
- Area Planning Board

Building on the best practice model of Flintshire “Early Help Hub”, we will seek to develop a pilot and Housing Help Hub model which will bring multi agency partners together to review complex housing needs cases with a view to enabling joint working and development of shared plans through a truly multi disciplinary team approach. We have identified funding through the Phase 2 Grant to try and pull this model together. Furthermore the Housing & Prevention Services is due to benefit from a “restructure” later in 2020 and consideration will be given to the development of a “Complex Needs Team” which will seek to build a multi-agency response drawing upon key partner agencies to offer a joined up approach to complex needs case management.

## **Adopting psychologically-informed and trauma-informed approaches to commissioning and service delivery within local authorities, housing and support providers (including health, mental health and substance misuse services).**

All staff delivering front line homelessness and support services plus all Housing Support Grant commissioned services staff have been through the PATH Training offered by Welsh Government and Cymorth Cymru in recent years. Whilst this is a positive approach and services are now skilled up and have a basic awareness of psychologically and trauma informed approaches, further work is required to ensure that this is truly embedded at the local level and translates to better services at the frontline.

All commissioned services are required to demonstrate a commitment to staff training and support in this area and to support staff in a psychologically and trauma informed way. This is monitored through contract reviewing arrangements and providers are expected to offer a range of the following:

- Management supervision and support
- Clinical supervision
- Team meetings
- Access to counselling services
- Online training modules
- Mandatory training models

Having benefited from the initial tranche of PATH Training, Flintshire is eager to enhance this approach and support and process of testing and enabling psychologically and trauma informed approaches across its services. We would seek to do this through a service transformation approach and would be eager to learn from the experiences of partners such as Cymorth Cymru and The Wallich. We would be eager to collaborate with other Local Authorities and engage in a Regional or National activity to enable these approaches to be truly embedded across the sector. We also look forward to engaging with the “All Wales Traumatic Stress Project” and we await further details how this project will be rolled out by Mental Health colleagues at Welsh Government.

Flintshire is due to retender and recommission Housing Support Grant Services in 2021-2022 and will ensure that psychologically informed and trauma informed approaches are key to the procured requirements. To help inform the commissioning process and acutely aware that needs for housing and support services may change on the back of the covid 19 pandemic, we seek funding for detailed research into changing needs with a view to informing commissioning strategies ahead of this retender process.

### *Links to Planned Activity for Phase 2*

*PROJECT 4 – Scoping HSG Priorities*

*PROJECT 5 – PIE Service Transformation*

## **Striking the appropriate combination and safe delivery of remote and face to face support.**

Whilst the restrictions placed on providers and services as a result of lockdown and social distancing has been a significant challenge, it is accepted that there have been benefits and innovation in regards to how support is offered. We shall work with our partners to seek a pragmatic response to what should be retained and as we move towards the “new normal” a clear focus will be on balancing public safety advice with meaningful and person centered support and engagement.

Providers or support services commissioned through Housing Support Grant have provided weekly updates throughout the pandemic period and updated on how they have been able to provide support to their clients. Regular contact has been maintained with Flintshire Housing Support Grant Commissioning Team and the local Co-ordination Cell to offer assurances around safety and wellbeing of both staff and service users.

Floating Support services have been provided mainly by telephone calls, zoom and social media with mobile phones issued for those people who didn't have access to this means of technology. Some services have been providing face to face support whilst ensuring Welsh Government Social Distancing Guidelines are observed and appropriate risk assessments and training and guidance for staff.

New ways of working have been adopted as services have needed to adapt and respond to the challenges of lockdown and social distancing. Essential items such as medication, shopping, cleaning products etc. have been delivered to households when required and a lot of providers have held games evenings, quizzes etc. using various items of technology to aid and assist with engagement. .

Teams have been in constant contact with their counterparts in other Local Authorities to learn from each other and give examples of best practice, problem solving etc. Regional meetings at all levels have continued to be held, although virtually and this offers increased opportunities for partnership working and more responsive approaches to challenges through better use of technology.

### *Links to Planned Activity for Phase 2*

*PROJECT 2 – Rapid Rehousing Staff*

*PROJECT 3 – Rapid Rehousing Home Starter Funding*

*PROJECT 6 – Tenancy Rescue & Start Up Packages*

*PROJECT 7 – Specialist Debt Advice*

*PROJECT 8 – Embedded Caseworker for Housing Advice*

*PROJECT 10 – Mental Health & Wellbeing – Collaborative Outreach*

*PROJECT 11 – Criminal Offender Tenancy Support*

*PROJECT 12 – Mental Health Support Worker*

*PROJECT 15 – Peer Mentoring and Tenancy Sustainability*

**Seeking to up-skill and empower local volunteers and community assets to help deliver a strategic, coordinated response to ending homelessness.**

During the covid 19 pandemic, Flintshire has seen a positive response from the community and voluntary sector. Local Groups have provided a range of support and activity across the county. Little of this activity has however been focussed on the homeless community and there is a lack of structured engagement with community groups and faith groups when considering the response to homelessness.

There are some community facilities that offer food provisions throughout the week that homeless people have historically tapped into, but there is no significant body of outreach services and this means there is little activity “enabling” a street based lifestyle. Some adhoc outreach activities are undertaken by some community and faith based groups and it will be important to engage and refocus these groups now that people are off the streets.

Greater engagement and co-ordination of activity will be possible through the development of a multi-agency Homeless Forum which has been brought together and will be further enhanced on the back of the covid response. This extended network of partners has linked into the themed approach to the Co-ordination Cell.

We will bring community and faith based groups into the Homeless Forum Membership to help them understand the corporate response and future direction of travel for homelessness and prevention focused service delivery and ensure any voluntary activity is focussed on sustaining accommodation, preventing homelessness and signposting into services to enable people to quickly move off the streets when they are identified as rough sleeping.

*Links to Planned Activity for Phase 2*

*PROJECT 5 – PIE Service Transformation*

*PROJECT 14 – Renting Ready Training*

*PROJECT 15 – Peer Mentoring and Tenancy Sustainability*

## **Adopting a collaborative approach to planning and delivery.**

Throughout the covid crisis partnership working and collaboration has been a key element of our work to support and house people. This builds on existing partnership arrangements across the county and within the wider North Wales Area.

The North Wales Regional Homeless Strategy “People, Homes, Services” provides a vehicle for further collaborations amongst the 6 North Wales Local Authorities and there is a clear commitment to learn from each others experiences and where possible share good practice and explore opportunities for joint commissioning of services.

As outlined earlier in this Plan there are opportunities for engagement with strategic partners through mechanisms such as:

- Flintshire Homelessness Forum
- North Wales Community Cohesion Group (Wrexham, Flintshire, Denbighshire)
- North Wales Homelessness Strategy Steering Group
- North Wales Housing Support Grant Group
- North Wales Homelessness Taskforce Group (HMPPS, Probation et al)
- Area Planning Board

## **Enabling solutions for people with No Recourse to Public Funds.**

Within our existing “covid cohort” of homeless households, we have 4 males with No Recourse to Public Funds. These individuals have been accommodated and have received support and assistance during the current health crisis as part of the countries health crisis response. We are committed to ensuring they do not have to return to the streets and will explore avenues of support for these individuals through wider networks of services.